

CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE OF THE ROCKY BOY'S
RESERVATION

IMPACTS OF THE DPHHS SUBCOMMITTEE BUDGET
REDUCTIONS TO THE CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE OF THE
ROCKY BOY'S RESERVATION

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BY:
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PRESENTED TO:
JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES

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MONTANA STATE CAPITOL ROOM 102
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INTRODUCTION

Good Afternoon, Honorable Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). My name is Bruce Sunchild, Sr., and I had served as the Vice-Chairman of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation. My Tribe is a long time supporter of providing the best healthcare and services to our people given our economic situation at Rocky Boy. Like most communities in Montana, the Rocky Boy's reservation is no different and probably worse off than most due to our most recent disaster this past summer that resulted in severe flooding on the reservation. We are still recovering from the flood devastation and will be for some time since our health facility was rendered useless and we have to rebuild it as well as other infrastructure such as roads, buildings, homes and so on.

Today, I am here to discuss the impacts of the DPHHS Subcommittee Budget reductions to my Tribe. The bottomline is that we rely on the state funds that are appropriated thru this

subcommittee. For some time now, the United States has not funded the true need of health services for Indian people. For example, the medical inflationary rate over the past ten years has averaged 11 percent. The average increase for the Indian Health Service (IHS) health services accounts over this same period has been only 4 percent. This means that our Tribal Health Programs are forced to absorb the mandatory costs of inflation, population growth, and pay cost increases by cutting health care services. We can't afford to do this anymore.

Here are some points I need to inform you about:

1. the DPHHS budget funds core services that are essential to all Montanans, including Native Americans such as, LIHEAP, Meals on Wheels, Healthy Montana Kids, Weatherization, Seniors and the list goes on;
2. These dollars go to every community in Montana to provide essential services to our state citizens and supports small businesses in Montana as well;

3. Medicaid and Health Montana Kids serve Native Americans at about 25% of the total need, stretching Indian Health Services dollars to serve other essential needs in tribal communities;
4. In this current economy, it is extremely important that state and federal programs work together, otherwise we all lose the services we desperately need;
5. This time of the year LIHEAP is critical to the survival of our low income population including our elders, we cannot go without heating assistance in the frigid weather of Montana -
MENTION THE CHAVEZ DONATION
6. We understand that 75% of the LIHEAP funds were authorized but we need the full 100% because 25% less means that someone is going without and I ask you all today to restore this to 100% because we just cannot absorb the loss;
7. My Tribe is a Self-Governance Tribe, meaning we have an agreement with the federal government to provide federal program services to our people. We get a lump sum of money based on outdated funding formulas but we still have to

provide all the services to our tribal members. This is a very difficult challenge but the Tribe wanted to be self-governing as opposed to the getting direct services from the federal governments. The direct services tribes receives their services directly from the federal government.

8. The bottomline whether a Tribe is a direct services tribe or a self-governance tribe, we need the state appropriated funds to provide services to our people. At Rocky Boy, we figure that we get about 40-60% of our actual need to provide all of the services to our members;
9. This means our people are already going without since our economy in northcentral Montana is struggling like most of Montana. Our unemployment rates is extremely high in the winter and if we don't have a fire season in the summer then our economy really suffers;
10. Most of our Indian reservations on in our most rural areas in Montana so our people have to travel more distances to receive or provide services such as Meals on Wheels. Because

of our rural existence, we must drive further to reach our elder population and need more drivers to get all the meals out in time;

11. Family Planning funding is critically needed on Indian reservations, for instance, better access to voluntary family planning and related health care would prevent many deaths, abortions, and injuries. Family planning helps our members avoid high-risk pregnancies, prevent unwanted childbearing, and reduce infections, such HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, that could lead to death, disability, and infertility, and helps to improve women's health in general;

I could go on and on, however I know you have important work ahead of you and please I urge you all to do the best you can for all of us Montanans, including our Indian people residing on our reservations in Montana.

On behalf of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's reservation, I urge you to restore those budget reductions that will cripple the desperately needed services for our state citizens and

our native american populations in Montana. I also would like to thank the Honorable Joint Subcommittee Members for allowing me to testify today. Thank you.